

**IN THE ABSTRACT:**

The Abstract as amended below with a replacement Abstract shows added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~.

Please DELETE the Abstract in its entirety and substitute the attached new Abstract.

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a<sup>1</sup> After ~~processing~~ thinning a fingerprint image in a conventional method, a target feature point is detected. ~~The feature point is assigned an ID, and the information about each feature point is managed. The information~~ Information about a target feature point ~~includes~~ stores the information indicating the position of the ridge containing a vicinal feature point relative to the position of the ridge containing the target feature point in addition to the position, type, and direction of the target feature point itself. Then, the information ~~about the target feature point is~~ checked in a matching process, and the vicinal feature point is ~~also checked in the matching process on a feature point contained in a ridge matching in position the ridge of the target feature point.~~ When the target feature point and the vicinal feature point match ~~each other~~ in position and direction, and are different ~~from each other~~ in type only, the mark has ~~is reduced to~~ a value indicating a matching level. Then, a matching result of the vicinal feature points is obtained as a matching mark, and it is determined whether ~~or not~~ the target feature point is matching by determining whether ~~or not~~ the matching mark is equal to or larger than a threshold.

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